

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies demonstrate how AIDS can heavily affect young people's lives in the long term, even if they are not infected or fall sick themselves. These are examples of young people who are taken out of school because family members fall ill and thus it becomes economically impossible for them to send all their children to school.

Vann Rin

Vann Rin knows how poverty can become an obstacle to education. A 15-year old resident of the village of Phun Thom in Kandal Province, Cambodia, Rin enrolled in school because she "wanted to have knowledge". She attended school for five years and, after repeating twice, completed grade three.

Rin has three brothers and two sisters, and both of her parents have medical problems. She dropped out of school when an older sister died, leaving her as the oldest daughter. She herself made the decision to drop out because "I saw that my mother with a baby could not carry palm juice". She helps in the fields, takes care of the family oxen, cooks, and makes sure that her siblings get off to school.

Rin feels sad that she was forced to abandon her education, especially when she thinks of her classmates still in school. "I feel lonely", she said. Perhaps, she added, she will be able to return next year. She is young and still has time.





She...

... does not go to school any more. For one thing, her small, rural school has been disintegrating under the impact of HIV/AIDS: teachers, already in short supply, have been dying, feeling too ill to teach, or moving to the city to seek medical care. For another, her grandparents – newly responsible for the grandchildren after losing their son and daughter-in-law to AIDS – have opted to spend their meager income on school fees for her two brothers, but not for her.

At age nine she does not have HIV/AIDS, but she is growing up without parents, without an education, and without the knowledge or resources to guide her choices in life. Her future partners or her future husband may well be HIV-positive. If so, she too, voiceless and powerless, will become infected. And if she lives long enough to have children, she will be unable to give them any better chance in life.

12 year old Sunita is a fifth grade student in a local Government school in India. She has three siblings, the youngest one four years old. Recently, Sunita's mother needed a blood transfusion when she was about to deliver her fourth child. Sunita's father donated blood and his blood was detected to be HIV positive. The hospital and the whole neighbourhood have now come to know that Sunita's father is infected with the virus. After hearing the news, the principal and other school authorities have decided not to allow Sunita to attend school.

Sunita

Mukesh

Mukesh is 15 years old and he is a good student. He wants to become a teacher when he grows up. Mukesh and his two younger sisters live in a small town. Their mother is semi-literate and his father has not been well for the last two years or so and thus has been frequently absent from work. Eventually, the family decided to go to hospital where Mukesh's father was diagnosed to have early symptoms of AIDS. The family is shattered. Mukesh had to drop out of school to look after his family.